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Critical Ideas In Prefaces From 1700 To 1710

CRITICAL IDEAS IN PREFACES
FROM 1700 TO 1710

BY

EFFIE MARGUERITE MORGAN

A. B. James Millikin University, 1913

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

IN ENGLISH

IN

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1916

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1916

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

June 2 1916

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPER-

VISION BY Effie M. Morgan

ENTITLED Critical Ideas in Prefaces from 1700 to
1710

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF A. M. in English

H. G. Paul

In Charge of Thesis

Stuart P. Sherman

Head of Department

Recommendation concurred in.*

Committee

on

Final Examination*

*Required for doctor's degree but not for master's.

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CRITICAL IDEAS IN PREFACES FROM 1700 TO 1810.

INTRODUCTION.

In the first decade of the eighteenth century the art of criticism began to make for itself a definite place in the literary world. In its practice were enrolled those who had succeeded and those who had failed as poets and dramatists. Among the most important of these critics were John Dennis,¹ Jonathan Swift,² William Congreve,³ Richard Steele,⁴ Charles Gildon,⁵ George Farquhar,⁶ and Joseph Addison.⁷ Of all these critics of that decade, John Dennis was perhaps the most important for he then gained for himself, - for a time at least - the dictatorship in criticism.

1. "Dennis was known to his contemporaries, not as a playwright or poet, but as 'the critic'. This title is obviously a mark of distinction, not from other Dennises, but from other critics. No such title was given to Gildon or Hughes or Addison or Steele. Nor was it an ironical distinction, rather one given in recognition of serious purpose and solid attainment. For in bulk and solidity of performance Dennis was easily first among the English critics of his own time and of earlier times."

Durham's Critical Essays of the Eighteenth Century, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1915, XXII, (Unless otherwise stated all references to Durham are to this volume.)

2. "The critical work of Swift is much more important (than Steele's), though a good deal of it is inextricably mixed up with the work of Pope and Arbuthnot - - - the lion's claw is generally perceptible enough."

Saintsbury, History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe, New York, Dodd, Mead & Co., 1902, II, 449-450. (All subsequent references to Saintsbury are to this volume.)

3. Congreve's critical ideas were to be found mainly in the prefaces of his plays. Comedies of William Congreve, Methuen and Company, London, 1895, I and II.

These writers used nearly every possible method of presenting criticism to the public. For example, Dennis issued his Grounds of Criticism¹ (1704) in book form; Steele published his periodical literature, The Tatler²; and Farquhar wrote his Discourse on Comedy³ in a letter to a friend. The form most frequently used, however, was the preface, for playwrights,⁴ essayists⁵, and poets⁶ attached prefatory articles or dedications to their works, in which they vented their critical ideas.

4. "Nowhere does he formerly enunciate a theory of poetry, nowhere set forth his critical principles in due form and order - - -. The very fact that he thus approached criticism, however, helps to place him, to show him for a man impatient of formalism, impatient of elaborate parade of knowledge, a critic satisfied to record the impression he personally received from a work of art and consequently a critic whose words derive their weight from the fact that Dick Steele's impressions are worth knowing."

Durham, XXXIV, cf, Saintsbury, II, 448.

5. "Whatever critical ability he possessed, best appears in the work he published before the beginning of the century, so that in fairness he had to be taken from the place in the second decade which his most pretentious work would have given him." Durham, XVII, cf, Saintsbury, II 429-30.
6. "Never an abstract philosopher, he is only incidentally a critic." Durham, XXIX.
7. "Addison stands close by Steele as an opponent of a narrow rationalism or classicism." Durham, XXXIV. cf. Saintsbury, II, 437.
1. Dennis, Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, London, 1704 Bysshe, Art of English Poetry, London 1710, Ed. 4.
2. Steele, Tatler.
Collier, Essays on Several Moral Subjects, London, 1709.
Dennis, Reformation of Modern Poetry, London, 1701.
3. Farquhar, Discourse on Comedy, 170, republished in Durham's Critical Essays on the Eighteenth Century, New Haven, 1915.
4. cf. Steele, Rowe, Cibber, Congreve, Dennis.
5. Dennis, Phillips, Watts.
6. Swift, Steele, Dennis, Addison, Collier.

The criticism of this period was, as Professor Spingarn¹ described it, "a very troubled stream", for it included a number of important tendencies or schools. These have been variously grouped,² but for present purposes it seemed better to classify them under the heads of neo-classicism, rationalism, moralistic and patriotic tendencies and the school of taste.

The basis of the neo-classical creed, brought over to England from Italy and France, involved an admiration for the ancients and a desire to use the classics as models for the moderns.³ Consequently, the criticisms of Aristotle⁴ and Horace⁵ or the precepts derived from the works of such poets as Virgil and Homer were the rule and guide of the neo-classicists. Because Aristotle and Horace limited their consideration to poetry, the critics of this school neglected prose and centered their interest on epic poetry and drama. This desire of the modern writers to make their own the greatness of the classics finally induced them to pay most of their attention to form.

Closely related with this neo-classic tendency was that of rationalism. The basis of this latter trend in criticism was, according to Professor Spingarn, the mechanical philosophy of

1. Spingarn, Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, Oxford, 1908, introduction last page.
2. Hamelius, in the Englische Studien, divided the criticism of the period into neo-classicism, rationalism, romanticism and religionism. Durham, II.
3. Dacier, Oeuvres d'Horace, Amsterdam, 1735, p. 70.
4. Saintsbury, History of Criticism, II, 314.
5. Spingarn, Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, I, LXVIII.

Hobbes.¹ This 'mechanical order-in-nature' idea justified the use of rules.² These rules of the rationalists, however, were not arbitrarily based on the laws of the ancients as were those of the neo-classicists, but they were to be regulated by good sense³ and reason and were to approximate as closely as possible the laws of life.⁴ This rationalistic conception, too, accorded with the Horatian conception of decorum⁵ and with the ideas of poetical decency. As a result of this following of good sense, the style of the writers was simplified by doing away with the bombastic, figurative language which had prevailed, and by substituting that regulated by nature and reason. Finally, the writers of the period came to the conclusion that the ancients represented best both the observance of nature and of good sense,⁶ and on this common ground, the neo-classicists and rationalists were united.⁷

The third tendency, which had points in common with both the neo-classic and rationalistic schools, concerned itself with a discussion of the moral purpose of poets and of poetry in general. Aristotle,⁸ as the disciple of Plato, first started this critical discussion by giving poetry a double function of pleasure and profit.⁹

1. Spingarn, I, LXVIII.

2. Ibid., LXVIII.

3. Ibid., LXVIII. cf. Rymer Tragedies of the Lost Age, p. 24.

4. St. Evremond's Works, 1719, II, 83.
Dennis, Impartial Critik, 1693, p. 49.

5. Spingarn, Critical Essays, LXVIII.

6. "The school of common sense in English criticism was born with the Rehearsal (1671) and this, even more than the theory of Rapin, determined Rymer's attitude toward poetry. ... Rymer speaks reverently of 'sense' in the Preface to Rapin, and definitely adopts the attitude of the Rehearsal in Tragedies of the Lost Age." Spingarn Critical ideas of the Seventeenth Century, I, LXXI.

7. Ibid., LXIX.

8. Ibid., LXIII.

9. Ibid., LXXIV.

The followers of the moralistic creed not only emphasized the profit side of poetry, but also ascribed to the poet the quality of divine lawgiver. This idea influenced the Italian critics¹ of the sixteenth century,² was carried over to England and utilized by Sidney and his school in the Gosson Lodge³ controversy, found some favor during the first half of the seventeenth century, and was finally called to do battle against the licenser of the Restoration. It reappeared in the critic's attempts at a moral justification of poetry and of the drama and in their efforts to introduce the Christian religion into the literature of the times.

Another of these critical tendencies of this age, was the patriotic. This involved an admiration for English authors and their works, an effort to relate literature and government,⁴ and a reaction against foreign influences, particularly against those of Italian and French origin.⁵

Finally, in a revolt against the rule - saturated

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1. Spingarn, Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, New York, 1908, p. 188.
 2. Spingarn, Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, I, LXXIV.
 3. An excellent account of this whole controversy is given in the Introduction to Spingarn's Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, I, LXXIV. cf. Gregory Smith's Elizabethan Critical Essays Oxford, 1904, I, Introduction, Sections I and II.
 4. The following authors declared for the English authors above those of other countries:
 Dennis, Impartial Critick, Spingarn, Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century III, 143, 152.
 Wolseley, Preface to Valentinian, Spingarn, II, 12.
 Shadwell, The Miser, Works, London, 1691, preface.
 Shadwell, Psyche, Works, Preface.
 Lee, Lucius Junius Brutus, London, 1681, preface.
 Shadwell, Lancashire Witches, London, 1691, preface
 Walsh, Anderson's Poets, London, 1795, VI, 566.
 5. Milton, Prose works, Ed. St. John, I, 214. Ascham, Schole master, 1570, Gregory Smith, Elizabethan Critical Essays,

creeds of the other schools of criticism, the followers of the school of taste believed that the true appreciation of poetry must come from the same functions that create it.¹ Poetry was to be judged by its effect on the mind and the heart. Then too, the theory of Longinus that the notice of 'beauties' in a work was of more importance than the notice of 'blemishes,' reacted against the carping criticism of the neo-classicists and rationalists. Furthermore, the school of taste recognized the influence of climate and race over literature. Professor Spingarn² best summarized the important elements of this school in the following explanation:

"The school of taste represents, then, a transition from the spirit of the seventeenth century. Criticism advanced from the static idea of literature to the idea of change and progress in culture, from the study of a work of art in itself and in vacuo to the study of its relation to the mind of man and to its external environment, from a general and abstract treatment to the consideration of particular passages and details, from the criticism of 'faults', to that of 'beauties,' from the concept of reason to that of sentiment and taste, and all these changes were, though tentatively and hesitatingly, indicated and sometimes defended by various members of the school of taste."

Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1904, I, 1.

1. The School of Taste is admirably explained in Spingarn's Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, I, Section IX, LXXXVIII.
2. Ibid, I, cv.

NEO-CLASSICISM IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

One of the main evidences of the neo-classical tendencies in the English Critical prefaces of the first decade of the eighteenth century is this obvious respect for French writers, particularly in the continental reverence for the ancients. Though these classical ideas had been brought over to England from Italy¹ by Sidney and his school it was rather from the French neo-classicists that the English critics derived this creed.

DuBellay² first introduced these classical ideas into France, but Chapelain first emphasized the formal rules of the Italians. These rules were carried on through the critical writings of Corneille, Rapin, LeBossu, Bouhours³ and were cast into their most complete form by Boileau. "These arguments of French Criticism, then," says Dr. Spingarn, "were fully introduced into England in the Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1674)⁴. This same influence was still flourishing in the critical prefaces of the first decade of the eighteenth century as is evidenced in the admiration which the English writers had for Corneille, Boileau⁵, in the respect they paid such French critics as Le Bossu, Rapin, Dacier and Bouhours, and the continued popularity of the French sources.⁶

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1. Paul, Life of Dennis, Columbia, 1911, p. 115.
 2. Spingarn, Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, I, LXIII.
 3. Saintsbury, History of Criticism, II, 314. Corneille was the master who gained Dryden's respect. - Spingarn I, LXIII.
 4. Spingarn, LXIII.
 5. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, London, 1701, p. 22, p. 18.
 6. Dennis, Preface to Essay on Italian Opera, London 1718. p. 1

In short, although other tendencies reacted strongly against it, neo-classicism still possessed and recognized the indebtedness to the French critics.

On the other hand, however, the English writers were independently investigating the works of the ancients, and trying to make their own the perfection of the classics.¹ In the first place, Virgil and Homer were greatly admired for their universality² and for their classic personification of the rules.³ In fact, they had succeeded so well that they never could be surpassed so the best thing for the moderns to do was to imitate them.⁴ Then again, Dennis and Dryden particularly admired the great poets as epic writers, while Pope considered them as models for the writing of pastoral poetry.⁵ In addition to this, Aristotle, who had based his precepts on the works of Homer, to be 'the first and greatest judge of poetry.'⁶

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1. Pope, Discourse on Pastoral Poetry, Prefixed to the Pastorals, 1704. Anderson's Poets, London, 1795, VIII, 17.
Gildon, Art of Poetry, London, 1718, Preface I, 1
Dennis, Large Account of Taste in Poetry,
Durham. Critical Essays, New Haven, 1915, p. 114.
 2. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, London, 1701, p. 17.
Bysshe, Art of English Poetry, Ed. 4, London, 1710, p. 6.
Dryden, Preface to the Fables, 1700, Ker, II, 251.
 3. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, London, 1701, p. 17.
Pope, Discourse in Pastoral Poetry, 1704.
Phillips, Preface to Pastorals, Andersons Poets, IX, 287.
 4. This admiration for Virgil existed as early as Renaissance Criticism. Professor Saintsbury called it the 'Virgil Worship.' History of Criticism, II.
 5. Pope, Discourse in Pastoral Poetry, 1704.
 6. Congreve The Way of the World, London, 1888, I, 314.
cf. Gildon's Art of Poetry, p. 4.

Since Aristotle and Horace had discussed epic and dramatic poetry, the followers of neo-classicism concerned themselves mainly with a criticism of these forms. The first of these, epic poetry, was not very popular in the first part of the eighteenth century; however, in the prefaces, the critics after mentioning the supremacy of the ancient writers of epic,¹ centered their remarks about the purpose and structure of the drama.

Their conception of the purpose of drama was for the most part based on the Aristotelian definition² of poetry, that is, of delight and instruction. For instance, tragedy was defined as, "...A very solemn lecture inculcating a particular providence and showing it plainly protecting the good and chastizing the bad, or at least the violent."³

Comedy too, was supposed to "ridicule folly and to punish vice".⁴ Generally speaking, however, the critics in neo-classic fields did not debate so widely the purpose of comedy and tragedy, as they did the question of structure of the drama, or how the moderns could attain the regularity of the classics.

The observance of rules and the emphasis of the fable,⁵

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1. Kennet, Complete History of England, London, 1706, p. 2.
Watts, Horae Lyricae, Anderson's Poets, London, 1795, VI 301.
 2. "The Drama of all reasonable Diversions, is the best that has ever been invented, at once to delight and instruct the world." Dennis, An Essay upon Italian Opera, 1706. Works, London, 1708, I, 445.
 3. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, London, 1701, p. 10.
Dennis, Liberty Asserted, 1704. London, 1704, Preface.
 4. Farquhar, The Twin Rivals, 1702, London, Ed. 1772, II, 1.
Dennis, Account of the Taste in Poetry, 1702, in Durham's Critical Essays p. 116.
 5. Dennis, Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, in Durham's Critical Essays, p. 144.

marked the consideration of dramatic construction. In the first place, the critics formed rules from the examples of the ancients to guide the writers in their efforts for literary perfection.¹ For example, the neo-classicists conceived that the dramatists must observe the unities of time, place and action.² This idea was so dominant, that Dennis in his desire to put these rules into practice, even remodelled Shakespear's Merry Wives of Windsor.³

In all, the requisite quality was regularity or the strict observance of the rules based on the classics. As Dennis wrote concerning this quality, "I endeavored to reconcile variety to regularity, for irregularity in the Drama like irregularity in life is downright extra extravagance."⁴

1. Gildon, Art of Poetry, London, 1718, I, 3.
Bysshe, Art of English Poetry, Ed. London, 1710, p. 2.
p. 3 Ibid.
2. Dennis, Iphigenia, London, 1700, Preface. The matter of scenes showed the influence of the French and the English Ben Jonson. Dennis wrote,
"...here by the word scene, I do not mean so much the place, as the number of persons who are in action upon that place at a time. I have therefore distinguished scenes in the following play as they have always been distinguished by the ancients and by the moderns of other countries, and by our own Ben Jonson. Any person who comes upon the scene of action or leaves it, makes a different scene." Dennis, Liberty Asserted, London, 1704, p. 6.
Congreve, Incognita, Novel, Charles Wilson Pseud. London, 1730, p. 68.
Dennis, A Plot and No Plot, London, 1697.
3. Dennis, Large Account of the Taste in Poetry, London (1702), in Durham's Critical Essays, p. 115, 195.
4. Dennis, Iphigenia, London, 1700, II.
cf...."I find that the forementioned regularity is nothing but the bringing some rules into practice."
Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, London, 1701, p. 11.

This regularity, the neo-classicists conceived, assisted the poet "to excite the ordinary passions more powerfully by the constitution of the fable!"¹ In the fable the characters were supposed to be universal,² and they were designed to inculcate the truth with more delight³ and make it shine with greater splendor.

To attain this regularity the playwrights needed to use rules. As Dennis maintained, "The necessity of observing Rules to the attaining of a perfection in poetry is so very apparent that he who will give himself the trouble of reflecting cannot easily doubt of it. Rules are necessary in all the inferior arts as in painting and music."⁴

The neo-classicists then proceeded to urge that the great design of arts was to restore the decay that happened to human nature by the fall, by restoring order, design, to bring back order, rule and method to our conceptions the want of which must cause all (or most) of our ignorance and errors."⁵ Since poetry was in a bad state, had part of that decay in it, not through want of pride or industry, the fault must lie in the ignorance of the rules".⁶

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1. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, p. 12.
 2. Dennis, Taste in Poetry, In Durham's Critical Essays, p. 117.
 3. Bysshe, Art of Making Poetry, p. 7.
 4. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, p. 4.
Bysshe, Art of English Poetry, Preface, p. 1.
 5. Dennis, Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, in Durham's Critical Essays, p. 146.
 6. Dennis, Preface to Iphigenia, London, 1700, p. 2.
cf. Watts, Horat Lyrica in Anderson's Poets, London, 1795, VI, 302.

THE RATIONALISTIC TENDENCIES FROM

1700 - 1710.

The rationalistic tendencies noticeable in the pre-faces between 1700 and 1710 stressed the inter-dependence of rules and reason, undertook the discussion of the 'observation of nature'¹ and good sense and fostered a desire for the acquisition of a restrained style in writing. This subordination of rule to reason² and good sense, might be traced back to the French critics Rapin,³ and Boileau,⁴ Rymer,⁵ Dryden⁶ and Dennis, were greatly influenced by Rapin,⁷ but as Professor Spingarn stated, it was The Rehearsal (1671) which finally introduced the school of good sense into England.⁸ This fundamental idea of good sense in writing, carried over to the first decade of the eighteenth century, found a typical expression in the statement that "reason was the foundation of all regularity".⁹ Dennis put the matter thus: "...Besides, the work of every reasonable creature must derive its beauty from Regularity; for Reason is Rule and Order and nothing can be irregular either in our conceptions or our actions, any further than it swerves from our rule, that is from reason."¹⁰

1. Spingarn, Critical Essays, I, LXVII.
2. Allowance must be made for the influence of Hobbes' philosophy. Spingarn, Critical Essay, I, LXVIII.
3. Rapin, Refl. sur la Poetique, Pref. l. 12, II 33.
4. Saintsbury, History of Criticism, II, 288-290.
5. Spingarn, Critical Essays, I, LXIX.
6. Ker, Essays of Dryden, Oxford, 1900, I, 228.
7. and 8. Dennis, Impartial Critick, London, 1693, p. 49.
cf. Spingarn, Critical Essays, I, LXIX
9. Dennis, Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, in Durham's Critical Essays, p. 145.
10. Dennis, The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, London, 1701, p. 13, 21. Dennis, Taste in Poetry (1703), in Durham's Critical Essays, p. 130.

The rationalistic conception of the rules, however, differed from the neo-classic idea, as we have already noticed, in that, the latter based their observance of the rules on the practice of the ancients, while the former based theirs on reason.¹ For the rationalists the "highest justification of the rules was that they represented the order that was found in nature."² This statement, originally made by Rapin,³ was accepted almost exactly by Dennis. In his dedication to the Advancement and Reformation of Poetry the English critic contended that, "....Both Nature and Reason, which two in a larger acceptance is nature, owe their greatness, their beauty, their majesty to their perpetual order; for Order first made the face of things so beautiful.....the cessation would bring chaos; so poetry must do the same thing. It can have neither greatness nor real beauty if it swerves from the laws which reason severely prescribes it."⁴

Gildon too, in his preface to The Patriot, emphasizes the belief that the rules were only 'nature-methodized'.⁵ "....But there is nothing more familiar with the ignorant decryers of the rules than to instance Shakespeare's pleasing without them never remembering or else not knowing that Shakespeare never pleases but when he has observed them as in his characters, passions

1. Dennis, The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, London, 1701, p. 13, 21.
Dennis, Taste in Poetry, (1702) in Durham's Critical Essays, p. 130.
2. Dryden, Dedication to the Aeneis, Ker, Oxford, 1900, II, 158.
Swift, Tale of a Tub, (1704), Works, 1755, I, 4.
Gildon, The Patriot, (1702), London, 1703, Preface I.
3. Spingarn, Critical Essays, I, LXVIII.
4. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, p. 15-16.
5. Gildon, The Patriot, London, 1703, p. 5.
cf. Cibber, Careless Husband, 1704, London, 1740, II, 1.
Pope, Discourse on Pastoral Poetry, London, 1795, VIII. II.

etc., the rules being only 'nature methodized', for sure nobody (I mean of sense) ever admired his conduct, the rules of which not being known in his time is his best plea for his offenses against them."

The conception of "nature methodized", was the basis of 'decorum.' Originating with Aristotle, this 'side of the social code in man's life' was developed and emphasized by Horace, and because it meant a methodization of nature, was allied with the school of rationalism.¹ This decorum in comedy, for instance, consisted in a 'drawing after the life,'² natural dialogue, and the characters portrayed according to their proper station in life.³ Dennis expressed this attitude when he dictated that,⁴

"The business of a comick poet is to shew his characters and not himself, to make every one of them speak and act, as such a person in such circumstances would speak and act. Comedy is an image of common life." In short, each person in comedy should be drawn in the speech and language best fitting his character in order to make up the perfect harmony of the whole. As Dennis explained it,

"The different characters in comedy, like the several parts in music make up the consort of the play, and as soon as one character says anything which does not belong to it, there is a string which is out of tune, and the harmony is lost."⁵

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1. Spingarn, Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, I, LXVIII.
 2. Dennis, Taste in Poetry, 1702, in Durham's Critical Essays, p.116.
 3. Congreve, The Way of the World, 1700, London, 1868, p. 313.
 4. Dennis, Taste in Poetry, p. 118.
 5. Dennis, Taste in Poetry, in Durham's Critical Essays, pp. 112-118
Gildon, The Post Boy, p. 1.
Pope, Discourse on Pastoral, p. 13.
Farquhar, The Recruiting Officer, Works, London, 1772, II 4.

Lastly, we may notice that with this desire to observe good sense and reason in writing came a discussion of good style, of purity of language and of propriety and aptness of expression. The use of obsolete words, according to Bysshe,¹ and Watts² prevented purity of diction and the excessive use of figures was not commendable. In all then, the thing to be sought for was propriety and aptness of language.

These rationalistic theories, finally in the eighteenth century, met those of neo-classicism on the ground that the ancients were the best example to follow, because they best illustrated the observance of nature and reason. John Dennis expressed this theory in his dedication to the Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry (1701).³ "Homer and Virgil wrote to their fellow-citizens of the universe, to all countries and to all ages,--- though caprice and extravagance may please the multitude who are always fluctuating--- yet nothing but what is great in Reason and Nature could be able to delight and instruct mankind." These forces were, also reconciled by Boileau and Pope. As Spingarn summarized it, "In the conflict between classicism and rationalism of which the seventeenth Century was the great battle ground, Rymer represents the force of reason on its static side of common sense of "petrified truth." In the theory of Boileau and Pope the two conflicting forces were speciously reconciled by the assumption that, since nature and reason were best exemplified in the ancients, classical practice

1. Bysshe,, Art of English Poetry, Ed. 4, London, 1710, p.5.

2. Watts, Horae Lyricae in Anderson's Poets, VI, 301.

3. London, 1701, p. 17.

cf. Dennis, Iphigenia, London, 1700, p.2.

rather than reason or nature itself should be the guide of the poet¹ or critic.

THE MORALISTIC TENDENCY.

Since Aristotle had given poetry the double function of pleasure and profit, and Horace had emphasized the instructive quality of poetry, the moralistic tendency which concerned itself mainly with a desire to give poetry an ethical significance, was most closely allied with the neo-classic school.² This idea, of the divine mission of the poet and the instructive purpose of poetry, never entirely absent from English criticism, was very strong at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, the critics endeavored to unite poetry and religion in spirit, they tried to emphasize the reforming power of the drama and of satire, and they attempted to do away with the looseness and immorality of Restoration literature.

Although the idea of the poet's divine purpose was echoed by a number of critics of this decade, including Congreve and Watts, it was Dennis who particularly emphasized its benefit to mankind: That poetry is the noblest of all arts and by consequence the most instructive and most beneficial to mankind, may be proved by the concurring testimony of the greatest men who have lived in every age; the greatest philosophers, the greatest heroes and the greatest statesmen who have as it were, unanimously cherished, esteemed, admired it."¹

Then too, its ancient origin and divine function were

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1. Critical Essays, I LXXXI.
 2. Spingarn, History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, Oxford, 1908, p. 188.
 3. Dennis, Grounds of Criticism in Poetry (1704); in Durham, Critical Essays of the Eighteenth Century, p. 143.

also remarked upon by Watts in his preface to Horae Lyricae.

According to him,

"This art was maintained sacred through the following ages of the church and employed by kings and prophets ---By this method they brought as much of heaven down to this lower world as the darkness of that dispensation would admit; and now and then a divine and poetic rapture lifted their souls far above that level of that economy of shadows."¹

Now, according to Dennis, instruction,² the final end of poetry, could only be accomplished by the excitation of passion,³ and for this excitation of passion two conditions were necessary, first that the language must be figurative;⁴ and second, that the passions must be felt by the author. Dennis further maintained

1. Watts, Horae Lyricae, in Anderson's Poets, IX, 291. cf. "Poetry, the eldest sister of all arts and parent of most....poetry sacred in its nature to the good and great," Congreve, Way of the World, London, 1888, p. 315.
Gildon, Art of Poetry, I, 1.
2. "The greater poetry is an art by which a poet justly and reasonably excites great passion, that he may please and instruct; and comprehends. Epic, Tragic, and the greater lyric poetry." Dennis Grounds of Criticism in Poetry (1704) Durham, p. 147,8, 150.
3. "Poetry attains its final end, which is the reforming the minds of men by exciting of passion....all instruction depends on Passion....Poetry instructs more powerfully because it moves more powerfully." cf. "Now the end of poetry is to instruct and reform, and obscenity in writing corrupts the manners." Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, London, 1701, p. 6. cf. also, "Poetry then is an art, by which a poet excites passion. (and for that very cause entertains sense) in order to satisfy and improve to delight and reform the mind, and so to make mankind happier and better; from which it appears that Poetry has two ends, a subordinate and final one, the subordinate one is Pleasure, and the final one is instruction" Dennis, Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, Durham, p. 147.
4. Dennis, Taste in Poetry, Durham, p. 110.

that there were two kinds of passion, vulgar and enthusiastic. The former included those that "were moved by the objects themselves or by the ideas in the ordinary course of life," and to the latter belonged those which were "moved by the ideas in contemplation or the meditation of things that are not found in the course of common life."¹

The second class of passions, the enthusiastic, according to Dennis, included religion because (under the influence of Longinus) he considered "religious ideas the most proper to give greatness and sublimity to discourse!"² This religious enthusiasm or admiration was only produced by such objects as in their nature "were capable of arousing it. Watts' explained it (this emotion) in his preface to Horae Lyricae,

"These thoughts or ideas which produce that enthusiasm which we call admiration are thoughts or ideas which had some proportion with such objects as in their nature are truly admirable"³

The best method of rousing that admiration according to the critics was the use of Biblical themes. The use of the Christian religion in poetry was not new in England, for (Spencer) Cowley, Davenant and Milton had linked religion and poetry,⁴ and

Dennis, Taste in Poetry, Durham, p. 110.

1. Dennis, Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, Durham, p. 151.
cf. Hopkins discussion of the relation of figurative language and passion. Friendship Improved, London, 17, p. 2.
Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, London, 1701, p. 19.
2. Dennis, Grounds of Criticism, in Durham's Critical Essays, pp. 162, 182, 185.
Dennis, Preface to Remarks upon Prince Arthur, London, 1696, p. 5.
3. Watts, Horae Lyricae, IX, 298.
4. Cowley, Preface to Poems, (1656) Spingarn, Critical Essays II, Whole Article. Davenant, Preface to Gondibert, (1650) Spingarn, II. For a discussion of the introduction of religion into poetry see Spingarn, Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century,

Dennis, influenced by Longinus had advocated anew the use of the most sublime and admirable source of enthusiastic passion.¹ This, he claimed was particularly desirable, for,

"The design of the Christian Religion is the very same as that of poetry, which can be said of no other religion; that the business of both is, to delight and reform mankind by exciting the passions in such a manner as to reconcile them to reason and to restore the Harmony of the Human faculties."²

Watts also maintained that the Christian religion furnished better subjects for poetry than the pagan religion.³

"With how much less toil and expense might a Dryden, an Otway, a Congreve or a Dennis, furnish out a Christian poem, than a modern play...The heaven and hell in our divinity are infinitely more delightful and dreadful than the Childish figments of a dog with three heads, the Buckets of the Belides, the Furies with Snaky hair, or all the flowery stories of Elysium. ...the advantage for touching the springs of passion will fall infinitely on the side of the Christian."

Introduction. "This struggle originated with Muzio, was discussed by Corneille, and the French religious epics influenced Cowley and Davenant,"

Spingarn, Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, p. 229.

1. Dennis, Grounds of Criticism, pp. 154-198.

2. Durham, pp. 154, 198, 204-5.

ct, Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, p. 13.

3. Watts, Horae Lyricae, IX, 299.

The moralistic tendency further held that the study of the Scriptures furnished the 'best sparkling images and magnificent expressions of writing'.¹ Dennis, carrying the argument still farther, affirmed that the ancients had attained their supreme excellence by infusing the spirit of religion into their poetry. He went on to argue that by following this example, the English might not only surpass the French,² who neglected it, but might even equal or surpass the ancients.

The discussion of the relation of moral teaching to literature, was especially vigorous during the early years of the eighteenth century, for the nation was then deeply stirred by the attacks and counter attacks in Collier's warfare against the "profaneness and immorality of the English Stage." The literary critics repeated the Puritan idea that the final purpose of dramatic poetry was to reform vice. As Collier at the close of the seventeenth century, expressed it,

"The business of plays is to recommend virtue and discountenance vice, to show the uncertainty of human greatness the sudden turns of fate and the unhappy conclusions of violence and injustice,"³

1. Watts, Horae Lyricae, IX, 298-9.

2. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, pp. 25-29.

3. Collier, Short view, 1698, p. 1.

Five years later Gildon in his answer to Collier confirmed this view,¹

"Dramatic poetry, whose business and aim is to reward virtue, to expose vice, to regulate our criminal passions by examples always more touching than precept; and which is owned by the greatest enemy of the present stage, if under a just regulation, the most effective way the wit of man can invent for the advancement of virtue."

Comedy was the main dramatic form of that period and the one in which writers had sinned the worst. Naturally the critics turned their attention to the general critical tendency which it displayed. They admitted that comedy could not exist without "the ridiculum" that is, comedy necessarily had to represent characters of a low type in order to satirize folly and vice,² but they criticized the prevailing coarseness popular in that kind of drama. On the other hand, the critics lamented the general neglect to which the public at that time subjected tragedy,³ which "was the most useful, the most noble and the most innocent of entertainments".⁴

Then too, this puritan attack stressed the moralistic objection to the profaneness and obscenity in literature. Various writers admitted their guilt, and promised to reform their work. For instance, Dryden, at the close of the seventeenth century, answered Collier's charge thus,⁵

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1. Saintsbury, History of Criticism, II, 402. Spingarn I, LXXXIII.
Gildon, The Patriot, London, 1703, p. 3. Preface to Shakespear, London, 1702, p. 3.
 2. Cibber, Careless Husband, London, 1704, Preface. Dennis, Taste in Poetry, in Durham's Critical Essays, pp. 122-3.
 3. Rowe, Royal Convert, London, 1707, Preface.
 4. Gildon, The Patriot, London 1702, Preface, p. 5. Farquhar,

"I wish I could affirm with a safe conscience that I had taken the same care (The Fables) in all my former writings, for it must be owned, that supposing verses are never so beautiful or pleasing, yet if they contain anything which shocks religion or good manners, they are at best what Horace says of good numbers without good sense: Versus inopes rerum, nugae que canare, ...Mr. Collier...in many places has taxed me justly: and I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness and immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph, if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance."

In the same year (1700) and in much the same vein, Farquhar wrote,

"I am below the envy of great wits and above the malice of little ones. I have not displeased the ladies nor offended the clergy; both of which are now pleased to say that a comedy may be diverting without smut and profaneness."¹

Gildon, too, tried to conform to the new standard of drama, for, in his play The Patriot, 1702, he said,

"I have endeavored to form...a tragedy in which there was nothing profane, nothing unfit for the greatest and the chastest ear."²

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- Twin Rivals, London, 1772, Preface, p. 3.
 5. Dryden, Preface to Fables, Ker, pp. 251-272.
 1. Farquhar, Constant Couple, London, 1700, Preface.
 2. Gildon, London, 1702, p. 1.

"It has been a long complaint of the virtuous and refined world that poesy, whose original is divine, should be enslaved to vice and profaneness: ...How unhappily is it perverted from its most glorious design, ...Was it for this destruction she was furnished with so many intellectual charms, that she might seduce the heart from God, the original beauty and the most lovely of beings?"¹

Bysshe, going farther, expressly stated his purpose of 'avoiding all manner of obscenity'² and Dennis reasoned that obscenity 'was inconsistent with the very nature of poetry for, ..."Religion gives a very great advantage for the exciting of passion in poetry."³ ...Obscenity has something too gross and fulsome in it to consist with the delicacy of a tender⁴ passion....and nothing can be possibly consistent with an art which runs counter to the very end and design of that art."⁵

While poetry was addicted to vice and profaneness, the 'license of the plays was waging open war with the 'pious design

1. Watts, Horae Lyricae, p. 296.

"They have exposed her most sacred character to drollery, and dressed her up in a most vile and ridiculous disguise for the scorn of the ruder herd of mankind. The vices have been pointed like to so many goddesses."

2. Bysshe, Art of Poetry, p. 1.

3. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, p. 6.

4. p. 7, Ibid.

5. cf. Wolseley's Preface to Valerian. This gave one of the most important treatments of the relation of morality and literature, Spingarn, Essays, II. Ibid. p. 6.

of church and state,'¹ thereby causing such critics as Watts, Steele, Farquhar and Gildon to revolt against the prevalent coarseness and licentiousness. In respect to this Watts wrote,

"Thus almost in vain have the throne and the pulpit cried reformation, while the stage and licentious poems have waged open war with the pious design of church and state."² and even more emphatically, Steele complained that,

...."passages of such nature being so frequently applauded on the stage, it is high time that we should no longer draw occasions of mirth from those images which the religion of our country tells us we ought to tremble at with horror."³

Although the critics agreed with Collier that the stage

1. Watts, Horae Lyricae, p. 296.

2. Ibid.

3. Steele, Lying Lover, London, 1702, p. 102.

cf. "But indeed the stage has no enemies but such as are hypocrites and real enemies to virtue, because the stage is a professed enemy to them and their darling vices. The stage exposes knaves and fools, misers, prodigals, affectation and hypocrisy and that has provoked some to be its zealous foes under the pretended name of savetity and religion.... Even our modern enemy of the drama, Mr. Collier has been so fari as to own that human unit can't invent a more effectual way of advancing virtue and discouraging vice, by which alone he destroyed the greater part of his book."...Brown. Stage Beaux Tossed in a Blanket, London, 1704, p. 2 ct. 3, (continued).

"The civil war silenced the stage for about twenty years, tho' not so lewd then as it has since grown; and it had been happy for England, if this had been the worst effect of the war.... The restoration brought in many ill customs by corrupting our morals; and to which the reviving the stage and bringing women out and encouraging and applauding the many lewd, senseless and unnatural plays, that ensued up in this great change, did very much contribute." Buckingham, Key to Rehearsal, Preface p. X.

needed remedying they disagreed with his plan for abolishing plays. Gildon justified his adverse criticism of the theatres by saying that,

"I must confess I have been very free with the Theaters, but I don't at all repent it. Their distemper wanted the incision knife and I have given it to them."¹

In the main, the general opinion of the critics of the period was expressed by Farquhar when he advised the following course for the theaters,

"The success and countenance that debauchery has met with in plays, was the most severe and reasonable charge against their authors in Mr. Collier's Short View; and indeed this gentleman has done the drama considerable service, had he arraigned the stage only to punish its misdemeanors, and not to take away its life; but there is an advantage to be made sometimes of the advice of an enemy, and the only way to disappoint his designs is to improve upon his invectives and to make the stage flourish by the virtue of the satire by which he thought to supply it."

1. Gildon, Comparison Between Two Stages, London, 1702, p. 4.

2. Farquhar, The Twin Rivals, London 1772, Preface, p. 8.

"But her most excellent majesty has taken the stage into her consideration; and we may hope, by her gracious influence on the muses that wit will recover from its apostasy; and that, being encouraged in the interests of virtue, it will strip vice of the gay habit in which it has too long appeared, and clothe it in its native dress of shawl contempt and dishonor." Steele, Lying Lover, 1703, p. 102.

"I had....been very careful to avoid everything that might look ill-natured, in oral or prejudicial to what the better part of mankind hold sacred and honorable," Steele...Tender Husband, p..193.

As Farquhar hinted, satire was one of the main means of attacking the evils of that day, but strangely enough, there was little discussion of it in the prefaces of 1700-1710, beyond an attempted definition. Before this time, Dryden had defined it as a 'sharp, well-mannered way of laughing a folly out of countenance.'¹ Later, about the beginning of our period, Swift cleverly described it as,

..."a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind reception it meets with in the world, and that so few are offended by it. But if it should happen otherwise, the danger is not great; and I have learned from long experience never to apprehend mischief from those understandings."²

Defoe, not such a clever, graceful satire writer as Swift, plainly stated that,

"The end of Satire is Reformation; and the author, though he doubts the work of conversion is at a general stop, has put his hand to the plow."³

This satire, although it carried with it a semblance of truth, needed not be true. Bysshe expressed this view in

1. Dryden, Sylvae, Ker, II, 253.
Dennis, Grounds of Criticism in Durham's Critical Essays, p. 150. cf. Swift in his pref
2. cf. Swift in his preface to The Tale of a Tub, wrote, "It is a great ease to my conscience that I have written so elaborate and useful a discourse without one grain of satire intermingled, p. 1.
3. Defoe, The True Born Englishman, Preface p. 34.

his Art of English Poetry,"As no thought can be justly said to be fine unless it be true, I have all along had a great regard for Truth, except only in passages that are purely satirical, when some allowance must be given....for satire may be fine and true satire, though it be not directly and according to the letter, true; 'Tis enough that it carry with it a probability and semblance of truth."¹

In all, then, the general attitude toward satire was that it might be a "good-natured or clever way of portraying the follies of man," it need not be absolutely the truth, but it must have as its underlying principle, reformation.

During this period of ten years then, the moralistic tendency in criticism with its various attempts to reform by means of poetry, drama, and satire with its efforts to rid the literature of profaneness and obscenity, closely mirrored the national struggle to recover from the period of degeneracy of the restoration. It was really an echo of the ancient puritan reaction against too licensed literature, which had burned for a while in Elizabethan criticism. Whatever its visible effects were on the critical tendencies of the new century or on the succeeding literary productions, for the time, at least for the writers of the first decade it was an important force for the better.

1. Bysshe, Art of English Poetry, preface, p. 6.

THE PATRIOTIC TENDENCY

The patriotic tendency may be clearly traced in English criticism from the time of Ascham's revolt against the 'Italianated Englishmen';¹ through the seventeenth century, when Dryden declared for Englishmen over Frenchmen,² to the first decade of the eighteenth century when Dennis expressed his admiration for the writers of his own country, and his disapproval of the Italian opera. In the literary criticism between 1700 and 1710, this tendency was manifested in, first, a loyalty to English writers and their works; second, a strong insistence upon the interdependence of good government and noble literature; and third, a marked reaction against foreign influence.

The influence of this tendency is apparent in the renewed interest in blank verse. But with the re-awakened interest in Shakespear and Milton came a desire to 'shake off the bondage of rime'³ and to follow those celebrated poets. Milton particularly exerted a strong influence for blank verse. In his preface to The Monument Dennis gave his reasons for using this metrical form, - "'Tis written in blank verse, and not in rime, not only because I thought that the former would give me more liberty....

but because .. Mr. Milton looked upon rime as a bondage."⁴

Watts, another great admirer of Milton believed that blank verse

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1. Ascham, The Scholemaster, in Gregory Smith, Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, 1.
2. Dryden, Essay of Dramatic Poetry, Ker, I, p.
3. Dennis, The Monument, London, 1702, x.
4. Dennis, The Monument, London, 1702, x.

could be written with "all due elevation of thought and modern style without going back as far as the days of Chaucer and Spenser.¹ The critics had before then as an excellent example and proof of this, Milton's Paradise Lost, in which even the 'roughest cadences were beauties because they by variety prolonged the pleasure of the reader.²

The second evidence of this patriotic tendency may be discovered in the increasing regard which the critics displayed for the English writers of the preceding centuries. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, but at no other time, Chaucer was mentioned by Bysshe and Dryden. The former condemned his obsolete language,³ but the latter, in the extensive discussion of his qualities in the Preface to the fables, called him, the father of English poetry, held in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or

1. Watts, Horae Lyricae, IX, 301.
2. "The following quotation from the preface to Poems on Affairs of State which reached its fifth edition in 1703, shows that these were those who found the couplet monotonous even where it was at the height of its popularity. 'They (critics) allow none but Iambics which must by an identity of sound bring a very unpleasant satiety upon the Reader. I must own that I am of the opinion that many rough cadences are to be found in these poems and in that admirable Paradise Lost, so far from faults that they are beauties and contribute by variety to the prolonging the pleasure of the Readers.'" Havens, Englische Studien 1909, p. 183.
3. ---- "for though some of the ancient, as Chaucer, Spenser and others have not been excelled, perhaps not equalled, by any that have succeeded them either in justness of description or in propriety and greatness of thought; yet their language is now become so antiquated and obsolete that most readers of our age have no ear for them," Bysshe, Art of English Poetry, p. 4.

the Romans, Virgil.¹

More notable than the admiration expressed for Chaucer during this time, was that accorded Spenser. While his popularity at this time is to be traced chiefly in the use of his diction and verseform as burlesque, still there were writers like Gildon, Dryden and Pope who admired him as a master of language and of epic and pastoral poetry. About this time Bysslie in his Art of Making Poetry had omitted quotations from Spenser because of the obsolete expressions, so Gildon in his book on the same subject, severely criticized the former for his neglect for as he said, --- "Byssile has rejected images --- for this reason I have been pretty large in my quotations from Spenser, whom he has rejected, and have gone through Shakespear, whom he seems willing to exclude, being satisfied that the charms of these two great poets are too strong not to touch the soul of any one who has a true genius for poetry."²

Dryden, who ranked Spenser as the successor of Chaucer,³ also admired him for his success in language.⁴ Spenser's main fame, however, was due to his epic and pastoral poetry, for which Pope greatly admired him.⁵

Another great English writer who enjoyed a renewed popular-

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1. Dryden, Preface to Fables, Ker, II, 265. "The father of English poetry---- heed in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians heed Homer, or the Romans Virgil; the fountain of good sense---- learned in all the sciences, a rough diamond which must be polished ere he shines."
 2. Gildon, Art of Poetry, p. 4.
 3. Spenser insinuated that the soul of Chaucer was transferred into his Spenser's body. Ker, II, 247.
 4. Pope, Discourse on Pastoral Poetry, p. 12.
 5. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, p.23.

ity was Shakespear. The critics from Ben Jonson's time had been divided as to whether they should admire him unreservedly or condemn his faults, but at the beginning of the new century the admiration for his genius prevailed. Still the love of regularity induced many writers to revise many of his plays. For instance, a few of these adaptations were, Measure for Measure by Gildon, Merchant of Venice by Lord Lansdowne and Merry Wives of Windsor or by Dennis.¹

At the beginning of this decade, the prefaces show that Dennis criticised Shakespeare's plays for their lack of regularity, but he admitted the merit of the writer:² Gildon took practically the same view in his preface to the Patriot published a year later (1702).

"I know the patrons of this liberty will quote Shakespeare for it, (justifying gallery,) but they should reflect, that there is no man so absurd and blind an admirer of that great poet, as not to know and own that among his great beauties, he has very considerable faults" --- no name is sufficient to justify an absurdity."

1. Paul, John Dennis, Columbia, New York, 1911.

2. "I thought that after so long an acquaintance as I had with the best comic poets among the ancients and moderns, I might in some measure depend upon my own judgment and I thought I found here three or four extraordinary characters that were exactly drawn and truly comical and that I saw besides in it some as happy touches as ever were in comedy. "Dennis, Taste in Poetry, Durham, p. 114. "This is not said to derogate from Shakespear's merit who did more than anybody else in the same line. Ibid, p. 116.

c f -- "But I content myself to consider him only as a poet, and therefore to confine myself to his poetical beauties and errors." Gildon, Preface to Shakespear 1910, p. 1. "Our stage has degenerated not only from the taste of nature, but from the greatness it had in the time of Shakespear." Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, p. 19.

Toward the close of the decade (1709) however, Rowe the first Shakespearean editor in his preface to Shakespear commended his beautiful expression, naturalness and greatness of thought.¹ In fact, he felt that he could not take his leave of poetry without presenting 'the greatest of poets', to the public.²

The last great writer to arouse the enthusiasm of his countrymen, was Milton. In the preceding century, he had been comparatively neglected but his growing popularity was due to the inherent worth of his verse, the admiration of the nation which was still puritan at heart, and the championship of the Whigs who adopted him as their own great poet.³

Milton's learning and his uncommon genius for poetry were excellently described by Kennet. "His great natural and acquired parts and his excelling in so many kinds of learning, besides his daring and uncommon genius in poetry have made him looked upon as one of the most extraordinary persons that the last age provided; and even the greatest admirers of antiquity have a particular reason to rank him with most of the ancients whom he so nearly resembles."⁴

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1. Rowe, Ed. London, 1709, ii.
 2. Rowe, Ed. London, 1709, ii.
 3. Dryden had called Milton the poetical son of Spenser, and Gildon repeated this in the statement that Milton and Waller were made poets by Spenser.
Dryden, Preface to the Fables, p. 247.
Gildon, Art of Poetry, p. 4.
 4. Kennet, Complete History of England, 1706, p. 3.

Likewise, Dennis praised Milton for his sublimity and his harmony, and challenged the most zealous admirers of antiquity to¹ produce anything like his work.

The first estimate of Milton might best be shown by a quotation from Haven's Influence of Milton.

"How much the mass of the reading public knew Paradise Lost, whether it was much read in the more remote cities and towns at this time would be hard to say. Philips poems, the praise of Dryden, and such works as Byshe's, may have done much, but we know very little of this class of persons or their tastes at this time. We shall be considerably assisted, I think in forming a conception of Milton's position in the first decade of the eighteen century, we might compare it with that of George Meredith. Read as Meredith is by all the literary, admired by many, exalted into a cult by some and ridiculed by others, there yet remains a large company of those who really know nothing about him. Further more there is not what I call reliability in his reputation one is constantly surprised by those who admire him."

Another manifestation of the patriotic tendency is traceable in the growing insistence upon the interdependence of literature and government and especially in the prominence given the idea of the relation of the drama to the public service. The wisest and best people had thought the stage worthy the encouragement

1. 2 Dennis, Grounds of Criticism, In Durham, p. 158
 Havens, Seventeenth Century Notices of Milton, Englishche Studien, 1909, p. 18
 Dennis, Preface to the Monument, 1702, 1-2

ment of the state,¹ but Gildon explained the situation, as due to the neglect of those in authority. "That is the statesmen of our nation have not yet thought it worth their while to rescue the Drama from private Interest to the public service; by which neglect it is become a province over run with such numerous and strange monsters that require a Hercules to destroy them."²

This attitude of the government to ward the theatrical productions of the day, was condemned by Steele³ for, as he said, the leaders of the nation, had failed to see that the English stage presented nothing save what was 'agreeable to the manners, laws, and religion of the country. This view was also supported by Dennis in his preface to Liberty Asserted,

"As the entertainments of our theaters are public he wrote and supported by public authority, it is but just that the instruction, which is the ultimate end of them, should tend to the public advantage."⁴

Again this tendency was clearly manifested in the reaction against foreign influence, particularly against the French and Italian. This readiness to magnify national writers was noticeable in Elizabethan times and grew more marked with the importation of French literature during the Restoration. Be-

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1. Brown, Stage Beaux Tossed in a Blanket, p. 1. "There are others who are in effect enemies of the stage, who yet pay dear enough for public diversion, while large subscriptions enrich a single entertainment of the crowd, Ibid, p. 3.
2. Gildon, Preface to Shakespear, p. 4.
3. Steele, Preface to Lying Lover 1703, p. 1.
4. Dennis, Liberty Asserted, 1704, Preface, p. 1. cf. "The wits of the present age being so very numerous and penetrating it seems the grandees of church and state begin to fall under horrible apprehensions lest these gentlemen during the inter-calls of a long peace should find leisure to pick holes in the weak side of government." Swift, Tale of a Tub, Preface, p. 24. Wolseley, Preface to Valentinianus, Spingarn, II, 12.

fore 1700, Wolsley had mentioned the 'senseless topgeries' imported from France'. Again, this tendency was clearly manifested in Shadwell's remark that,

"'Tis not barrenness of wit nor invention that makes us borrow from the French but laziness."¹

Up to this time, i.e. 1700 the English had been more or less dependent on French literature, but at the beginning of the new period, the Britons dared to emphasize the greater perfection of their own countrymen. For instance, John Dennis wrote of his own literature that it " was more strong, more harmonious than the French --- blank verse was not inharmonious and the French pretend to no poetical numbers."²

Of longer duration than the revolt against the French that was against the Italian influence. In the period we are considering it took form in the objections to the opera. The opposition to this form of entertainment united nearly every prominent critic of the day. Although they did not at the period under discussion, express an opinion, Swift, Pope, Addison and Steele later spoke or wrote against the Italian Opera. Early in the century 1706 John Dennis in the preface to his Essay on Italian opera wrote

"This small treatise is only levelled against those operas which are entirely musical, for those which are dramatical may be partly defended by the examples of the ancients"--- the Italian opera, another entertainment which is about to be estab-

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1. Shadwell, Psyche, Works, London 1691, p. 1.
2. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, 1701, p. 20.

lished in the room of plays, is a diversion of more pernicious consequence, than the most licentious play that ever has appeared upon the stage."1 The main objection seemed to be to the effect of the music, for Gildon characterized the opera as "monstrous production of nonsense and sound,"2 and Dennis said that the "luxury of the modern Italians was the soft effeminate music which abounded in the opera."3

In fact, the objection to the music, here mentioned by these two writers came to be a very strong reaction against that kind of production, until later in the century it was taken up by all the prominent men of the day.

In reviewing briefly then, this patriotic tendency in the first decade of the eighteenth century, the following evidence may be considered the most important, first, an admiration for English authors, particularly the puritan Milton,⁴ a hint of a closer relation desired between the stage and government; and a reaction against the foreign influences of France and England, especially the borrowing of French sources, and the growing popularity of the Italian opera.

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1. Dennis, Essay on Italian Opera, 1706, Works, London, 1718.
 2. Gildon, Preface to Shakespear, p. 1.
 3. Dennis, Essay on Italian Opera, Preface, p. 400.

EVIDENCE OF THE SCHOOL OF TASTE FROM 1700 TO 1710

The last of these critical creeds to be considered was what Professor Spingarn has called the School of Taste. Taste, (or as Dennis defined it, "a fine discernment of truth")¹ had a large and varied use in the latter part of the preceding century. Altho' the conception back of this term² represented a reaction from the rigid rules of the neo-classicists and rationalists, in a sense it was an outgrowth of both of them. This relation has been shown most clearly by Spingarn in the following passage:

"But side by side with the school which they represent, there was developing another school which I have called, perhaps rather vaguely, the School of Taste. Those whom it includes differ widely in their methods, their theories, and their literary preferences. Some of them; like Mere and Bouhours, represent or inherit the traditions of the Precieusius, more or less purified by classical culture and tempered by good sense; others, like Saint-Evremond, renew the spirit of the earlier and freer stages of classicism; still others like La Bruyere seem the natural products of the

1. Dennis, Liberty Asserted, 1704, p. 1
of Swift's use of the word "men of taste".
works, Author's Apology, p.xl
2. For a history of the changes in the use of this work see
Spingarn's Introduction to Critical Essays of the Seventeen
Century, xcii

classical spirit itself. But all show this forth in common, that there is something in poetry which the so-called rules of art can neither create nor explain and this something they seek for the most part in the concept of taste. It might be assumed from their disdain of the rules that they are the opponents of the classical writers from whose practice these rules were deduced; but this is not the fact. Nearly all of them agree in their respect for classical poetry; and La Buiyere for example, is as ardent an advocate of the ancients as Temple¹".

One of the first contributions which this school of taste made to literary criticism came through the study of literature in relation to its historical environment, or the effect of climate and race on poetry! This conception, of course, was not a novel one. Long before the days of the school of taste, Giraldi Cinthio and Guarini had maintained that the difference between ancient and modern literature was due to "historical circumstance"². Then, too, Bouhours, Fontenelle, and St. Evremond were exponents of this theory.³ In England, Milton had declared liberty necessary for literature,⁴ Cowley had considered the Ovidian idea of the effects of peace and disorder on literature, and in the latter part of the century,⁵ Dryden and Dennis expressed interest in this same inter-relationship.

1, 2, 3 and 4, 5 from Spingarn, 1, cii of Shaftsbury, Characteristics, 1711, 1, 64, 72, 76, 148.

Gildon, Preface to Shakespear, 1710, p. 4.

Before the opening of the century, Dennis discussed this idea in his Impartial Critik and in his Remarks on Prince Arthur. Kennet, however, was the only one who mentioned this relationship.

"Fontenelle observes" (he wrote) "the wit of one climate more easily suffers transplanting into another than its trees and fruit; ¹ and that tho' 'tis said there's more diversity among wits than faces, yet one face by steadfastly regarding another cannot take on a new resemblance but wit may. And 'tis thus that people do not always retain the turn of thought while they derive from their native climate, but by reading greek books, be-
² come as it were allied to the Greeks".

A second question claiming attention of the School of Taste was the matter of the proper nature of criticism. Their conception was quite at variance with the practice of such neo-classicists as Rymer, whose method of applying the rules they had set up tended to stress the blemishes rather than the beauties of the work criticized. Boileau's translation of Longinus (1674) ³ practically started this attack on the criticism of faults.

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1. Spingarn, Critical Essays, 1, cii
 2. Kennet, Complete History of England, London 1706, p.3
 3. Dryden in 1685, (Ker 1, 264) and after him Mulgrave (Buckinghamshire 1, 100) Dennis (Pref. to Impartial Critik, 1693 and Congreve too, criticized the many who let fly their censure and through their rashness mistake their aim.

Dennis, tho' the world today regards him as a type of the carping critic clearly exhibits the reaction against the fault finding of that time. In the preface to Advancement and Reformation of Poetry (1701) he wrote -

"The design of all poetical criticism must be, if it is just and good, to advance so useful and so noble an art of Poetry. I am satisfied that a writer has a great deal of reason to be more apprehensive of half critics who are governed by opinion, or guided by prejudice or swayed by partial affectation; and who see faults but in some places and at some particular times; for such censors are inexorable to the least of our errors".¹

In a somewhat similar vein Congreve criticized the many "who² let fly their censure and thru' their rashness mistake their aim". Gildon likewise mentioned the evil effects of these same

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1. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, P. 3
 2. Congreve, Way of the World, p. 10

.. ignorant critics!¹ In short, the main objection was against the "imperfect, partial and prejudiced criticks, who could discern faults, but who "lacked discernment to find out beauties.²

The School of Taste also stressed the importance of the consideration of genius in judging the literary productions. This conception was probably introduced and made popular by the translation of Longinus'Treatise on the Sublime (1674).³ It is certain that before this time there was little discussion of the term; but gradually the critics came to perceive that by simply following the rules a writer could not produce a great work of art, and that the one thing which he needed was genius.

Even Bysshe, altho' he wrote Rules for Making Poetry, was unwilling that it should be laid to his charge that he had furnished tools and given a temptation of versifying to such (poets or writers) as in spite of art and nature undertake to be poets and mistake their fondness for rime or necessity of writing for a "true genius of poetry".⁴ This necessity of genius for good writing was recognized by Gildon. Fond as he was of rules, he admired exceedingly the "true ethereal fire" in Spenser.⁵

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1. Gildon, Art of Poetry, preface p.1
 2. Dennis, Advancement and Reformation of Poetry, pp. 2 - 3
 3. Bysshe Art of English Poetry p. 1
 4. Bysshe Art of Poetry, Preface, p. 4
The following writers incidentally mentioned genius as a quality necessary for good writing;
Swift, Author's Apology, p. xii
Preface to Tale of a Tub, p. 25
Buckingham, Key to Rehearsal, Preface vi.
 5. Gildon. Art of Poetry, P. 1

Another phase of this critical tendency was concerned with the general taste of the English public. According to Dennis, "the English were never sunk so low in their taste (as at that time)".¹

Even familiar conversation was reduced to the monotonous level of merely "news and toasting".²

Of the poetry and drama, too, the critics declared that the public demanded an unusually low type of literature. In fact, no play was complete without "beau cullies and coquettes"³ and poor fools so gross that (in Congreve's estimation) they should really "disturb than divert the reflecting part of an audience".⁴

1. Dennis, Taste in Poetry (1702) Dunham, p. 131

2. "Familiar conversation is reduced to such a level among all sorts of people as perhaps never was known the world before" Dennis- An Essay the Italian Opera, 1706 3. "They (audience) take all innovations for grievances, and let a project be never so well laid for their advantage, yet the undertaker is very like to suffer for it. A play without a beau, cully or coquette is as poor an entertainment to some palates as their Sunday's dinner would be without beef and pudding" Farquhar: The Twin Rivals, Work, 1772, 11, 1.

4. "Those characters which are meant to be ridiculed in most of our comedies are of fools so gross, that in my humble opinion they should rather disturb those divert the well natured and reflecting part of an audience; they are rather objects of charity than contempt". Congreve, Way of the World, 1700, p. 1

In short many critics came to hold the theory that Wolseley and Dryden described in the latter part of the preceding century, "true genius could inform the meanest and most uncomely matter" but "without it nothing could be done."

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1. True genius like the anima mundi "which some of the ancients believed will enter into the hardest and driest thing, enrich the most barren soil and inform the meanest and most uncomely matter; nothing within the vast immensity of nature is so devoid of grace, or so remote from sense, but will obey the formings of his plastic heat and feel the operations of his vivifying power, which when it pleases can enliven the deadest lump, beautify the vilest dirt sweeten the most offensive filth; this is a spirit that blows where it lists and like the philosophes stone, converts into itself whatsoever it touches; Wolsley Preface to Valentinian, Spingarn Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century 11, 6.

2. "A happy genius is the gift of nature; it depends on the influence of the stars - say the astrologers, on the organs of the body say the naturalists, of heaven say the divines, both the Christians and the heathens -- how to improve it - many books can teach us, how to obtain it none; that nothing can be done without it, all agree" - Dryden, Parallel of Poetry and Painting, Ker 1, 138

This neglect of good poetry and drama they concluded was due to two things, first that the poets in the late reign had been too much encouraged, which produced a flood of mediocre and poor literature,¹ and second that the popularity of the opera was diverting² the public attention from the possible appreciation of drama. Because of this utter neglect, and the low taste of the public, discerning writers did not endeavor "to please the multitude", but wrote only to the "chosen few" or men of taste".³ Dennis stated the case thus,

"For he who writes to the many at present writes only to them, and his works are sure never to survive their admirers; but he who writes to the knowing few at present writes to the Race of mankind in all succeeding ages".

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1. Some people find a strange reason for this degeneracy; they say poetry has not been much encouraged in the late reign; But nothing can be more absurd; the people never were in a better humour for plays; nor ever the houses so crowded, but poets have had too much encouragement, too many scribblers surfeit the town with new eighteen penny plays" - Gildon, Comparison Between Two Stages, 1702, p. 5.
2. The present age is indeed an unfortunate one for Dramatic poetry, she has been persecuted by fanaticism, forsaken by her friends and approved even by music, her sister and confederate art. That was formerly employed in her defense and support". Rowe, Edition of Shakespear, 1709. p.1
3. Dennis, Taste in Poetry (1702) Durham, p. 129-9.
 'Tis for this reason, Sir, that whenever, I write I make it my business to please such men as you are. As very well knowing that what ever is wit has its immediate success from Fortune but its lasting one from Art, and Nature. That the people are always uncertain and fluctuating, and guided by opinion, and not by judgment, that the surest way to arrive at reputation is to please the knowing few for that they at last must draw in the multitude but are never to be drown in by them". Dennis, Taste in Poetry 1702. Durham, 129. "The author wrote only to men of taste and wit" Swift - Authors Apology, 1, 27

Thus, this School of Taste while surely present from the evidence which contemporary criticism afforded was really only sparingly discussed in the prefaces of 1700 to 1710. The main lines along which it was most clearly manifest, and its most important contributions at this time were in the changes which it made in criticisms of faults of the time, in the realization of the importance of genius and in the reaction against the public taste of the day.

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"The greatest and indeed almost the only advantage a poet reaps from what he writes is the opportunities, he meets with of making himself known to the best and greatest men of his age".
Hopkins, Friendship Improved. X

CONCLUSION

Of all of the critical creeds of this first decade of the eighteenth century, perhaps the three first named, neo-classicism, rationalism and the moralistic tendency were the most clearly manifest in the prefaces. Neo-classicism represented the admiration for the ancients and the observation of rules based on the classics. This influence was most potent in the development of dramatic structure, and the consideration of style in writing. Rationalism, on the other hand, advocated the use in writing of precepts based on reason and nature. In this period these schools were still distinctly apart, although there were occasional hints of a common ground, the following of the classics as the best examples of nature and good sense, on which they later unified.

The moralistic tendency represented the reaction against the degeneracy of the literature of the restoration and showed that the nation was still puritan at heart. The evidences of this in such prefaces as Farquhar's, Dryden's and Dennis' seemed to indicate that it was a part of the Collier controversy, begun in 1698. The principal effect on criticism was a renewed attempt to give poetry and drama an ethical significance by the introduction of religious enthusiasm and Biblical subjects, an effort to rid letters of the obscenity and profaneness that had crept into them through Restoration days; and lastly, a desire to rid the stage of the undesirable elements or those against the religion and morality of the country.

The patriotic tendency showed a re-awakened interest in

blank verse, (e.g. Dennis' The Monument.) a preference of English writings to the French, a special loyalty to English authors and a reaction against foreign influence. This interest in blank verse came through the admiration of Milton by the people who were still puritan at heart. Milton, therefore, was the poet of England who was chiefly honored. The classical instinct of the critics kept them from giving Shakespeare unstinted praise although his inherent worth was appreciated and the writers could not forbear issuing numerous adaptations of his plays. The drama at this time was in the estimation of several critics seriously hindered by the popularity of the Italian Opera. The most significant article opposing the Italian influence in this line was the Essay on Italian Opera by John Dennis. The writers all united in condemning it, and although at this time few mentioned it in their prefatory articles, Addison, Pope and other important men took their stand against it.

The last school, or that of taste, was not extensively discussed in the prefaces of the first part of the century. There were occasional evidences of it however when one showed a reaction against the rigid rules of the neo-classicists and rationalists, an objection to carping, fault-finding, criticism, an appreciation of the importance of genius in the production of true works of art, and a survey of the existing taste of the English public, whom the writers could not trust as true judges of poetry and drama.

Of all the critics of that time, a few names stood out prominently for emphasizing certain critical tenets. For instance, Steele was noteworthy for his clean criticism of immorality in writing and Gildon and Bysshe were important for their advo-

vocacy of rules, but Dennis was the man of the period who had something worth while to say on nearly everyt subject. He sensibly admired the classics, discussed reason, nature and good sense, explained their theory of religious enthusiasm in poetry, objected to the demoralizing effect of the Italian Opera, and the condition of the public stage, and even defined taste. In fact, he had the last word on nearly every subject. This period (1700-1710) however, represented his greatest work, for after this, he too, fell into the carping mood which earlier he himself had criticized and the following period was marred by a series of quârrrels between the prominent literary men of the time.

The first decade of the eighteenth century then was an important one in criticism. It represented a transition period in which all the critical schools were prominent; it means the recovering of the nation's criticism from the degenerating effects of the restoration; and a formation of the new literary epoch of the following period. For this ten years, the first English critic, John Dennis, was the leading spirit. In short, it might be said that this period in criticism, if no other, perhaps, was solely his.

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